

Governor Phil Murphy

Governor Murphy Signs Legislation Requiring the Removal of Obstructive Vegetation Near Railroad Crossings

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TRENTON – Governor Phil Murphy today signed legislation that will require railroad operators to remove obstructive vegetation near railroad crossings. The bill (S3425) aims to increase safety for passenger trains and commercial operators, and motorists and pedestrians crossing railroad tracks.

“Vegetation can pose a serious hazard to passenger and commercial train traffic, as well as those crossing railroad tracks,” **said Governor Murphy**. “This legislation will improve safety on our railroads and hold railroad operators responsible for removal of obstructive vegetation at our many railroad crossings.”

“NJ TRANSIT’s top priority is always the safety of our customers, employees and the public so we support initiatives like this to increase safety for all,” **said NJ TRANSIT President & CEO Kevin Corbett**. “Removal of vegetation, especially near grade crossings, enhances the line of sight for our locomotive engineers as well as drivers, bicyclists and pedestrians. That’s why these efforts have and will continue to be a critical component of our preventative maintenance efforts.”

S3425 requires railroad operators to destroy or remove obstructive vegetation upon and within its right-of-way at each intersection with a public road or highway, for 300 feet from the edge of the public road or highway or such other distance that the Commissioner of Transportation determines to be reasonably safe.

Primary sponsors of the bill include Senators Patrick J. Diegnan Jr. and M. Teresa Ruiz, and Assemblymembers Yvonne Lopez, Daniel R. Benson, and BettyLou DeCroce.

“Vegetation impedes the flow of transportation and presents safety hazards whether it be roads with automobiles and schools buses or on the tracks with trains,” **said Senator Diegnan**. “This law will enhance the safety of railroad crossings in the state by providing travelers on the road, or on the track, an unobstructed view while crossing.”

“For the safety of the rail riders, train operators and motorists, we must keep our railroad crossings clear of dangerously overgrown vegetation,” **said Senator Ruiz**. “This legislation will remove a potential hazard and reduce the likelihood of accidents.”

“Every day, trains weighing hundreds of thousands of pounds traveling at great speeds crisscross the rails throughout our State. As a major transit hub, the safety of our railroads is of paramount importance,” **said first primary sponsor Assemblywoman Lopez**. “Train tracks that are not kept clear of obstruction can prevent inspectors from noticing defects and can limit the visibility of important signage and signals at crossings. New Jersey must address any safety concerns that can place individuals at risk, and ensuring that overgrown vegetation is maintained is one way we can safeguard the wellbeing of operators, passengers and



bystanders alike.”

“Weeds and trees that have grown too close to train tracks or even begun to extend onto them pose an often-overlooked danger to both commuters and railroad employees,” **said Assemblyman Benson, chairman of the Assembly Transportation Committee.** “This overgrowth can contribute to the degradation of track structure and can cause more injuries among maintenance crews as they work in the vicinity of the tracks. Railroad operators can help prevent these issues by clearing obstructive vegetation along their routes.”

“Train conductors and automobile drivers need to be able to see clearly to prevent accidents,” **said Assemblywoman DeCroce.** “This law will help expedite the removal of obstructive brush at dangerous crossings and save lives.”

“Clearing vegetation and obstructions from all railroad crossings is just another measure that will keep the driving public, our children, and railroad employees safe,” **said Jerome Johnson, General Chairman and President of SMART Transportation Division Local 60.** “I would like to thank Governor Murphy and the Legislatures for all their efforts protecting the citizens of NJ.”

“Excessive vegetation has the potential to cause harm to commuters, railroad workers, and many others,” **said Ronald Sabol, state legislative director for the SMART Transportation Division.** “Thank you to the Governor for signing this important legislation that will improve safety across our statewide rail system.”

TRENTON - Governor Phil Murphy today signed S4141, also known as “Paul’s Law”, which will authorize parents or guardians to request the use of an individualized health care plan for students with epilepsy or seizure disorders. The law is named after Paul St. Pierre, a 13-year-old boy from Maple Shade who has epilepsy and advocated for the legislation.

“Every student deserves to learn and thrive in their educational environment, without worrying about their safety,” **said Governor Murphy.** “Paul’s Law will ensure that the safety of children with seizure disorders is a priority in our schools. I thank Paul and his family for bringing attention to this issue that affects so many parents and children across our state.”

The legislation signed today authorizes a parent or guardian of a student with epilepsy or a seizure disorder to request use of an individualized health care plan. This individualized health care plan will be developed for each student by the school nurse, in consultation with the parent or guardian of a student with a seizure disorder and other appropriate medical professionals. The plan will be consistent with the recommendations of the student's health care providers and will outline a set of procedural guidelines that provide specific directions about what to do in an emergency. Additionally, boards of education will be required to ensure that all building staff are trained in the care of students with epilepsy and seizure disorders.

“It is impossible to describe the magnitude of Governor Murphy signing Paul’s Law. This law will not only help my son Paul feel safe in school, it will protect 12,000 children in New Jersey that have epilepsy. Furthermore, It will give parents across the state peace of mind while their children are in school,” **said Paul St. Pierre, the namesake of the law, and his mother, Colleen Quinn.** “None of this would have been possible without Senator James Beach who spearheaded this legislation after our initial meeting. He has shown us that citizens, even a 13 year old boy can help to make change in the world. We are forever grateful to him. Lastly, we would like to thank Governor Murphy for signing this legislation into law. Today our governor has made New Jersey only the 5th state in the nation to create seizure safe schools. We would like to thank Governor Murphy for making this law a reality.”

“Schools must provide safe spaces for all children, including students who experience seizure disorders,” **said Dr. Lamont O. Repollet, Commissioner of Education.** “Providing training to staff will enable adults to recognize the early signs of seizures in students and provide them with swift access to the care they need.”

“Approximately 12,000 children in New Jersey have been diagnosed with epilepsy, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control,” **said Department of Health Acting Commissioner Judith Persichilli.** “Paul St. Pierre is a brave young man and I commend him for his advocacy to help protect other children with this

neurological disorder. It is critical that teachers, principals and other school personnel receive training in how to recognize and respond to a student experiencing a seizure in school. It's also important for parents to ensure their child's school has an up-to-date health plan for their child."

Primary sponsors of the legislation include Senators Jim Beach and Kip Bateman, and Assemblymembers Mila Jasey, Annette Quijano, and John McKeon.

"As a former teacher, I know that an unexpected crisis can occur at any time during the school day. However, if a student has a seizure disorder, appropriate training, complete information and an individualized health care plan can allow school personnel to be better prepared," **said Senator Beach**. "Thanks to the advocacy of Paul St. Pierre, this legislation will go a long way in educating our teachers and school personnel on how to handle a situation when one of their students has a seizure, whether it is in the classroom or at an after-school event."

"There are 12,000 students throughout New Jersey with a seizure disorder," **said Senator Kip Bateman**. "If you're the parent of a child with epilepsy, you want to be assured that all teachers, nurses, and school bus drivers are properly trained and can care for your child until advanced medical help arrives. I applaud Paul for his successful advocacy to ensure Garden State schools have the tools to create a 'seizure smart' epilepsy action plan which will save lives."

In a joint statement, **Assemblymembers Jasey, Quijano, and McKeon said:**

"It's vitally important that New Jersey's schools and teachers are well-equipped with the tools and knowledge to provide safe, enriching learning environments for students with epilepsy.

"In creating the mechanisms for schools to work with parents and guardians alongside nurses, teachers and administrators, children suffering from seizures would be guaranteed the extra support and care they need to see their full potential in the classroom realized.

"We'd like to give special thanks to Paul St. Pierre, who the bill is named for, and Miranda West, a Columbia High School student and National Epilepsy Foundation teen spokesperson, for their continued advocacy and help in ensuring New Jersey schools are safe for all students."

"Paul St. Pierre is a leader and a role model for all children living in New Jersey. Paul's advocacy not only for himself, but for the 12,000 children living with epilepsy in the Garden State, will make our schools a safer place for all children living with epilepsy," **said Liza Gundell, CEO of the Family Resource Network which includes Epilepsy Services of New Jersey**. "Children spend the majority of their day in school under the care of school personnel and in the company of their peers. Empowering educators and students with knowledge to not only recognize seizures, but the skills to act and treat a student who may be experiencing a seizure can ultimately save a child's life. Epilepsy Services of New Jersey is proud to provide monthly on-line seizure first aid and recognition training, as well as in-person training for schools throughout New Jersey. Paul's Law ensures that all New Jersey Schools are well-equipped with the tools necessary to provide a safe and enriching environment."

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